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**CO-CONSPIRATORS PLEAD GUILTY AND ARE SENTENCED FOR FRAUDULENTLY CLAIMING
MILLIONS IN FUEL TAX CREDIT REFUNDS**

Six Defendants Participated in the Scheme

Greenbelt, Maryland - Soumahoro Ben Amara, age 44, of Silver Spring, Maryland, pleaded guilty today to mail fraud and filing a false claim in connection with a scheme to obtain fraudulent tax refunds from the IRS, announced United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein.

Judge Titus also sentenced Telemaga Bamba, age 44, formerly of Virginia, today to 70 months in prison followed by three years of supervised release for the same offenses, and ordered Bamba to forfeit two Mercedes-Benz vehicles and a Harley-Davidson motorcycle. Judge Titus ordered Bamba to pay restitution of \$928,649.

"Tax refunds are issued to taxpayers who are entitled to them," stated C. Andre' Martin, Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation Special Agent in Charge. "IRS-Criminal Investigation will continue to aggressively pursue those who file false tax returns to claim tax refunds for which they are not entitled. Willfully filing a false tax return is the same as stealing and there are serious consequences."

According to Amara's plea agreement, between 2006 and at least July 2008 Amara filed 43 fraudulent corporate tax returns for tax years 2005 through 2007, asserting that corporations purportedly owned by him had paid taxes on fuel that was used for non-taxable purposes, entitling them to obtain refunds. The returns claimed fuel tax credit refunds totaling \$3,321,594 and the IRS issued refund checks totaling \$694,883 in response to some of the claims and rejected other claims. In fact, at no time did Amara or any corporation owned by him purchase the fuel on which the tax refunds were claimed.

Judge Roger W. Titus scheduled Amara's sentencing for June 8, 2009 at 9:00 a.m. He faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison for mail fraud and five years in prison for filing a false claim.

Mr. June Leftwich, age 34, formerly of Forestville, Maryland and Telemaga Bamba, age 43, of Bowie, Maryland, prepared the tax returns filed by Amara and shared the proceeds of the refund checks issued by the IRS. Leftwich also prepared 13 fraudulent individual and corporate tax returns for tax years 2003 through 2006, filed by his wife, Dorian Holmes, falsely claiming fuel tax credit refunds totaling \$830,384. The IRS issued refund checks totaling \$499,364 and the couple used the

fraudulently obtained tax refunds to purchase residential property in Houston, Texas. Judge Titus sentenced Holmes, age 28, today to two months in prison followed by three years of supervised release for her role in the scheme, and Judge Titus ordered her to pay restitution of \$499,364.

According to Bamba's plea agreement, he and his co-conspirators filed 154 fraudulent corporate tax returns for the tax years 2004 through 2007, claiming \$11,772,004 in refunds for fuel tax credits.

Leftwich also pleaded guilty and faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison for mail fraud and five years in prison for making a false claim. According to his plea agreement, Leftwich filed 60 fraudulent corporate tax returns for the tax years 2003 through 2007, fraudulently claiming \$4.2 million in refunds for fuel tax credits. Judge Titus has scheduled sentencing for Leftwich on March 30, 2009.

In a related case, on January 16, 2009, Judge Titus sentenced James Hallmon, age 44, of Fort Washington, Maryland, to 21 months in prison for filing federal corporate tax returns in which he fraudulently claimed \$647,060 in fuel tax credits.

United States Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein thanked the Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation for its investigative work and commended Assistant United States Attorneys Jonathan Su and Gina Simms, who prosecuted the case.

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